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ABSTRACT

Teacher preparation for multicultural education centers around learning about cultural diversity, examining relations of power and inequality, and responding affirmatively to sociocultural differences in schools and classrooms. This paper suggests that community-based service learning is an important part of this process. The document explains that service learning complements the community-based approach, presents opportunities for interaction with diverse socio-cultural groups, and emphasizes reflection, which prods analysis of community-based concerns. Finding that the popularity of community service learning belies research, the paper contends that there is a strong need for research-based practice, especially at the college level. The paper considers three related questions fundamental to community-based service learning for multicultural education: (1) why is community-based learning important to multicultural teacher education?; (2) how can it be combined with service learning in the preparation of teachers?; and (3) how do preservice teachers interpret community-based service learning in the context of their preparation to teach? Responses of 117 prospective teachers to community-based service learning develops a conceptual framework that describes these responses, and discusses implications for multicultural teacher education. Contains 35 references. (Author/BT)

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# Community Service Learning for Multicultural Teacher Education

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Abstract

Teacher preparation for multicultural education centers around learning about cultural diversity, examining relations of power and inequality, and responding affirmatively to socio-cultural differences in schools and classrooms (e.g., Nieto, 1996). In this article, we argue that community-based service learning is an important part of this process.

For several years, we have each used community-based learning within our multicultural teacher education courses. Service learning complements our community-based approach; it presents opportunities for interaction with diverse socio-cultural groups, and it emphasizes reflection, which prods analysis of community-based concerns. The popularity of community service learning belies research. There is a strong need for research-based practice, especially at the college level (Scheckley & Keeton, 1997).

In this article, we consider three related questions fundamental to community-based service learning for multicultural education: 1) Why is community-based learning important to multicultural teacher education? 2) How can it be combined with service learning in the preparation of teachers? and 3) How do preservice teachers interpret community-based service learning in the context of their preparation to teach? To this end, we examine responses of 117 prospective teachers to community-based service learning and develop a conceptual framework that describes these responses. Then, we discuss implications for multicultural teacher education.

> Teachers may find themselves asking what's cultural and what isn't. They can experience a cultural group firsthand, especially in settings where the cultural group is the majority and they are the minority. An experience like this can provide natural interactions between members of the group. It also may be beneficial to have an interpreter during these experiences, especially someone from the same cultural group. (S.B., 5/94)

Teacher preparation for multicultural education centers around learning about cultural diversity, examining relations of power and inequality, and responding affirmatively to socio-cultural differences in schools and classrooms (e.g., Nieto, 1996). In this article we will argue that community-based learning is an important part of this process. The comment above was made by a white preservice teacher after spending about three hours per week over a semester with a youth group in the Urban League, a predominantly African American community center. Her comment highlights an important insight she developed: that the community is an excellent resource for learning about one's students, and that adults who are members of that community can help interpret the community's culture to teachers.

For a number of years, we have each used community-based learning within our multicultural teacher education courses. Service learning is a method that seems to complement our community-based approach, since it presents opportunities for direct interaction with diverse socio-cultural groups, and it emphasizes reflection on experience, which prods analysis of community-based concerns. The popularity of community service learning on college campuses and in national forums suggests an educational significance that belies research. There is a strong need for research-based practice, especially at the college level (Scheckley & Keeton, 1997). For multicultural education, community-based study is often recommended, but actualized rarely (Zeichner & Melnick, 1996). It makes sense to use service learning as a vehicle to teach about issues of culture and power, yet these concerns are peripheral to most discussions of service learning (e.g., Wade & Anderson, 1996).

This article will consider three related questions fundamental to community-based service learning for multicultural education: 1) Why is community-based learning important to multicultural teacher education? 2) How can it be combined with service learning in the

preparation of teachers? and 3) How do preservice teachers interpret community-based service learning in the context of their preparation to teach? To this end, we examine responses of 117 prospective teachers to the process of community-based service learning.

## Why Community-Based Learning for Teachers?

> In my small hometown, there are very few multicultural people. We have a few Mexicans, African Americans, but mainly whites. I think this is sad because it was not until I graduated from high school that I came in contact with other cultures and races. I feel almost underdeveloped in a sense. I'm hoping to gain a new understanding and learn how to interact with multicultural people. (L.A., 9/97)

The student above plans to teach. She recognizes that she lacks exposure to the cultural diversity that comprises U.S. schools, but in attempting to articulate this, does not recognize her own bifurcation of the world into whites and "multicultural people." She is entering teacher preparation with a lack of awareness and knowledge that is very common among teacher education students. How to help her learn to teach in culturally diverse schools is being discussed more and more in the professional literature. McDiarmid (1992) put the problem this way: "How to prepare teachers to work with learners who are culturally different from themselves and from one another is a thorny, dilemma-riddled question for those charged with that preparation, whether in universities or school districts" (p. 84). Based on a study of a teacher education program in Los Angeles, McDiarmid points out that many teacher education programs respond to this challenge by instituting coursework that teaches generalizations, and in the process stereotypes, about different groups; that addresses attitudes through exhortations to preservice teachers about how they should feel; and that are heavily didactic and provide relatively little space for preservice teachers to engage actively in learning.

An alternative approach is to help preservice teachers learn how to engage with communities different from their own, by placing them in communities and helping them connect community-based learning with pedagogy and an analysis of larger issues of power. This is the approach discussed here. Community-based learning is essential for teachers in multicultural schools, although as we will argue throughout this article, one semester of a course that includes community-based learning is only a beginning. Community-based learning

can help preservice teachers learn to see themselves and their future students as cultural beings, recognize strengths and resources in communities different from their own, and locate communities within a larger political and economic context. Below we will discuss the value of community-based learning, then connect community-based learning with service learning.

Children and teachers are cultural beings. When we meet in classrooms, we meet not only as individuals, but also as members of cultural communities. We bring our cultures with us. Many difficulties in cross-cultural classrooms can be traced to differences in the cultures of students and the teacher. For example, several years ago, as a part of a larger study, one of us interviewed a white first grade teacher whose students were white, African American, and Mexican American (author's name, 1992). The teacher described her two Mexican American students as having "a problem" with language because they spoke Spanish at home. She described one of her African American students as having "a problem with attention... I almost think she's an attention deficit" because the student was physically active and social in class (Interview, 12/7/87). The teacher did not understand that her interpretation and evaluation of students' behavior and language skills was rooted in her own cultural background. During the interview, she shifted from a deficit model of describing her students to a culturally different model, for example, by re-phrasing "attention deficit" to "different learning style," but she was still clearly bothered by classroom behavior that did not conform to her own notions of "normal." Currently, students of color and students from low-income backgrounds disproportionately populate special education and lower academic tracks; teachers' inability to recognize cognitive and linguistic strengths they bring from home, and their inability to recognize their own frames of reference for judging students as cultural, is a major part of this problem (Harry, 1992).

Academic learning is built on students' prior learning, much of which takes place outside school. Very often teachers view marginalized communities as deficient and as hindering school learning. Effective teachers, especially teachers of students from historically marginalized groups, have learned to work with the community as a resource for teaching and learning, and to develop culturally-relevant pedagogy that connects the content and processes of academic instruction with the knowledge and learning processes that children bring from

home (e.g., Au & Kawakami, 1991; Ladson Billings, 1994; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990). Moll (1992) refers to this as learning to connect with the "funds of wisdom" that exist in the community, in order to create curriculum that builds on what parents and other adults know and teach their children. In a discussion of culturally-relevant mathematics, for example, Brenner (1998) notes that much research in mathematics education emphasizes cognition, in which the teacher focuses on children's thinking processes in relationship to the material being taught. However, she argues that eventually many teachers will need to go beyond children's thinking within the classroom; an ethnographic approach to exploring children's community-based knowledge complements a cognitive approach to classroom instruction, and strengthens teaching.

Community-based learning also has the potential to help teachers learn to contextualize marginalized communities within systems of unequal power, which provides an alternative to cultural deficiency interpretations that teachers commonly apply to student's communities (e.g., Fine, 1991; Grant & Sleeter, 1996). Teachers who view parents as "not caring," for example, often view professionals from the dominant society as attempting to save children from a "deprived" home and community life. Community-based learning may help preservice teachers learn to view communities in terms of their strengths and resources, and to see community problems in terms of political and economic issues such as racism or the loss of jobs.

For the preservice teacher above who wanted to learn to interact with "multicultural people," community-based learning provides a context for forming personal connections with people from a different group. It is crucial that teachers learn to connect personally with people across cultural borders. As Willinsky (1998) argues, a five-hundred year legacy of colonialism is a system of education in which people of European descent attempt to objectify the rest of the world for study, without necessarily engaging as human beings. Multicultural teaching is a highly personal endeavor, and teacher education programs that intellectualize it without also providing personal experiences for people to connect and get to know each other as equally intelligent and complex human beings may do more harm than good.

## Combining Community-Based Learning with Service Learning

> The whole community service was fun and taught me how to work with all kinds of children and be very flexible with their needs. I am going to continue volunteering there once a week and look forward to seeing the kids again. (K.H., 11/97)

Community service is becoming increasingly popular on university campuses as a way for college students to "get involved" or "make a difference." Service learning actually is not new, but has been around for at least 30 years (Pollack, 1997). Recently, however, multiple forces have spurred a climate amenable to volunteer activity and university-based service learning, not the least of which is national support for service as a way to rekindle community spirit. Service learning, a form of volunteerism which connects unpaid service to academic coursework, is touted as an educational activity that enhances student learning. National organizations, such the National Commission on Youth and the Carnegie Foundation, have endorsed service learning as a way to improve personal efficacy, foster altruism, and educate citizens (e.g., Boyer & Hechinger, 1981). Additionally, Presidential and Congressional actions, such the establishment of the Points of Light Foundation and the Americorps Program, and the passage of the National and Community Service Act (1990) and National and Community Service Trust Act (1993), have provided impetuses for youth service, including the formation of a national clearinghouse for service learning and the allocation of grant money (Wade, 1997).With this support, universities are launching service learning projects, some in teacher education programs. What contribution does service learning make to community-based learning for multicultural education?

There are many definitions of service learning, ranging from those that associate it with community development, to those that conceptualize it as a method to teach academic content (Pollack, 1997). The cultivation of civic responsibility commonly is discussed as service learning's main focus, to rehabilitate a vigorous, participatory citizenry (Barber, 1992). Arguably, teachers serve the public by educating its youth, hopefully to become first-class, involved, moral, reasonable, and caring citizens. Service learning can promote the consideration of teaching as service. Schools and teachers are in service of something for someone. The question is: in service of who and for what? As a teacher, who does one serve,

how, and why? For instance, do schools serve youth from poor families? If so, do schools serve them well or ill? Further, service learning can promote the consideration of teaching as service to the public. Schools and teachers serve an increasingly culturally diverse and economically stratified public. The question is: how does one best serve this public? As a teacher, what does it mean to help all children become first class citizens? What does it mean to provide an excellent and equitable education for all? The examination of teaching as public service can provoke dialogue around these questions.

Additionally, service learning strongly is characterized by the connection of "service" to "learning." Structured and purposeful reflection on service is intended to link service to learning. Rhoads (1997) describes reflection in a way pertinent to community-based learning for multicultural education, as a community-building process which is forward-looking, concerned with communities beyond the present. From this point of view, reflection should challenge students to identify forces that contribute to social inequities, consider efforts that might improve inequality, and engage in social change. Rhoads defines such reflection as "action/reflection" (p. 184) in which reflection suggests possibilities for social change and activism.

Experiences that occur as part of community service, connected with structured reflection activities, make use of constructivism as a developmental learning process. Through reflection on their community experiences, learners construct meaning as they confirm or deny their previous understandings (Scheckley & Keeton, 1997). According to Read (cited in Sheckley & Keeton, 1997), adults are more comfortable with meanings that maintain the viability of their prior knowledge. If they perceive experiences as "nothing new, " there is little cause for reconsideration of meaning. Alternatively, the disconfirmation of knowledge is marked by surprise and anxiety. Learners can either disregard unsettling occurrences or "make connections" which alter their future perceptions. Scheckley and Keeton (1997) suggest that individuals filter their experiences through a "perceptual screen composed of cultural norms, individual values, and personal experiences" (p. 36). Further, Radest (1993) describes the construction of meaning connected with community-based service learning as confrontations with familiarity and strangeness. Both claims imply that interpretations of experience depend

upon what is familiar and strange to prospective teachers at the outset of service learning. The construction of meaning from service learning experiences is relevant to multicultural teacher preparation, as we will show later in this article.

A small body of research speaks to this point. It indicates that, especially for European American preservice teachers, community-based service learning, linked with multicultural education or social foundation courses, helps to dispel obvious stereotypes, increase understanding of ethnic minority concerns, challenge presumptions about poverty, engender trusting relationships with ethnically diverse people, and foster commitment to working with urban youth (Boyle-Baise, 1998; Hones, 1997; O'Grady, 1997; Sleeter, 1995; Tellez et al., 1995). There is some indication that community-based service learning fails to help most preservice teachers link local circumstances to larger social, economic conditions (Boyle-Baise, 1998; Rhoads, 1997), and that short-term service experiences often reinforce, rather than challenge stereotypes (Tellez et al., 1995; see also Batchelder & Root, 1994; Giles & Eyler, 1994; Markus et. al, 1993).

In addition to helping focus and structure pedagogy for community-based learning, service learning makes other contributions. Service provides a realistic reason and reciprocal arrangement for student participation in the community. Community organizations depend on volunteers. Although volunteers can bring with them a wide range of attitudes, ranging from a desire to "give back" to one's community to a "do-gooder" wish to fix someone else's community, organizations that spend time training, orienting, and supervising volunteers can reap great benefits from having them there (McLaughlin, Irby & Langman, 1994).Work in a community agency can serve as a mutual exchange of value: the preservice teacher offers the agency services and time, and the agency, in turn, provides a context for learning. It is essential for those who receive services to assist in the determination of needs and the nature of responses. Rhoads (1997) calls this relationship between server and served "mutuality," and he argues that: "service that lacks mutuality is not community service. Instead such action is charity because community building it not at its heart" (p. 128). For the purposes of multicultural education, community building, as connection to and alliance with communities served by schools, is fundamental.

Also, community agency and program directors can serve as "cultural brokers," linking prospective teachers with other community members and activities, and orienting them to the community. Community agency directors usually know their clientele, understand local issues and problems, and network with other organizations (this cannot always be assumed however; some are not well-informed about local history and local issues).They can provide valuable information to preservice teachers prior to field experiences and assist them as they undertake community service. Both of us have invited directors to acquaint preservice teachers with community resources and concerns, which has eased prospective teachers into the field and helped avoid uninformed, inappropriate behavior. Also, directors have introduced us to activities and parents in communities who, then, have served as speakers and mentors for our students.

At the same time, we are concerned that service learning can become a "red herring" for multicultural education. If service is perceived as a one-way activity in which those who "have" decide for and give to those to "have not," then it becomes an example of middle-class patronage (Kahne & Westheimer, 1996; Montecinos & Sleeter, in press; Rhoads, 1997). If service is conceived as a consensual effort toward one common good, then it erases the conflict and diversity essential to understanding cultural pluralism (Varlotta, 1997). If service learning is approached as a method for teaching academic content in a way that does not engage issues of power, culture and community, then it disconnects from its earlier roots in community development (Pollack, 1997).Unless concepts such as "community" and "common good" are problematized, and power of dominant groups is questioned, service learning's contribution to multicultural teacher preparation will be minimal.

## A Development Framework for Service Learning Experiences

Coles (1993) claims that "no matter the kind of service rendered... the ultimate worth of the effort will depend a good deal on how a particular person manages to connect with those others being in some way taught or healed or advised or assisted" (p. 64-5).The ultimate worth

of service learning for multicultural teacher education depends upon what prospective teachers take away from the experience, and it is rarely clear what one learns from experience. We developed a framework for examining what preservice teachers learn from community-based service learning based on data we collected from our own students. We will present and illustrate this framework, then suggest implications for multicultural teacher education.

Our analyses stem from reflections of 117 preservice teachers who completed community service learning as an aspect of our multicultural education courses, between 1994 and 1998. One of us teaches in the Mid-west, the other taught in the Mid-west and now teaches on the West Coast. The preservice teachers included: seventy-four European American females, thirty European American males, seven African American females, three Mexican American females, one Mexican American male, and two Asian American females.

The time preservice teachers spent at their service sites varied between 20-50 hours over the semester, depending on when they completed the experience, and under which author. Most placements were in after-school tutoring or recreation programs in community centers. In most cases, they worked with children and adults from a racial or economic background different from their own. Ten preservice teachers provided service to classrooms in which the racial background of the children and teacher (in most cases) differed from that of the preservice teacher.

The service experience was part of a multicultural education course, and through both written assignments and class discussions, prospective teachers were encouraged to make connections between their experiences and various concepts related to multicultural education (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). Our data are drawn largely from reflective essays written during service learning, interviews with small groups of preservice teachers placed together at various community sites, and final reflective papers for the course.

The framework below represents a continuum, from those who maintained a deficiency and/or colorblind perspective, to those who becoming multicultural activists. Our discussion locates the significance of the service learning experience within preservice teachers' own development, as we were able to ascertain through their essays, papers, and interviews.

Confirmation of colorblind and/or deficiency beliefs

Almost one half of our European-American preservice teachers interpreted their experiences in a way that confirmed what they already knew about the "Other," and that minimized making a conceptual shift away from a cultural deficiency or colorblind perspective. For these preservice teachers, the experience reinforced stereotypes, reinforced color- or different-blindness, or provided no new learning. We interpret these students as challenging us to develop more powerful community-based service learning experiences, rather than as confirming that such experiences do not "work."

Stereotype-reinforcement. There was a strong cultural deficiency orientation among many European American preservice teachers, and in some cases, their community-based service experience reinforced stereotypes they brought with them. Perceived deficiencies included rough kids, unstable homes, and uncaring parents. In this view, parents particularly were seen as problematic and family situations as unhealthy. For example, a European-American male student who had minimal previous contact with non-European-Americans was placed at a predominantly African American community center. At first he was afraid to go there, although after he went and was greeted warmly, his initial fears subsided. However, throughout the semester he persisted in seeing African American people as having poor self-concepts and in connecting poor school achievement with what he presumed to be low self concepts. An early draft of his final course paper developed this theme; his instructor (one of us) spent considerable time trying to help him see unwarranted leaps in his reasoning. While the final draft of the paper was better, he commented that, "The [community center] sees people who have low self esteem all the time. People go there to seek help for their situations." (D.N.,

5/93). In the community center, when people brought problems for which they sought help, this student connected their problems with his prior belief that many African Americans have low self concepts, thus finding reinforcement for the belief.

The "Savior" variation to stereotype-reinforcement is the perception of self as a savior to children--as someone for kids to count on. Preservice teachers who viewed families as deficient sometimes saw people like themselves as offering role models for children, often as caring substitutes for absent or uncaring parents. A problem we have noticed with school-based field placements was reinforcement of this perception by teachers.

Well-chosen community-based field placements can interrupt stereotypes. For example, one of us placed several European-American and African American preservice teachers in an African American church. As they got to know many parents there, they described the parents as involved, caring, spiritual guides for their children. In most cases, preservice students who held onto negative stereotypes throughout the semester were not engaged in direct contact with adults who provided alternative images that challenged their stereotypes. Placements, as well as course activities and reflection sessions, are very important to challenging stereotypes preservice teachers bring with them. Many of those described later in this article as "eye-opening" began the semester voicing stereotypes, but had some of those stereotypes directly questioned and disconfirmed by their service learning experiences.

We are all alike. This view, which negates differences in favor of commonalities, was common among European-American prospective teachers and was also expressed by an Asian American preservice teacher. It tended to be expressed in three ways: kids are kids (colorblindness), kids are too young to notice race or poverty, and everyone deserves equal opportunities. Preservice teachers who focused on similarities made comments such as the following:

> "[During] community service learning. . . .I learned that children from different backgrounds than mine are not that different from me. . . They get in trouble, are careless, and like to have fun, similar to the way I was at their age" (European-

American student placed in an ethnically mixed, low-income center) (B. A., 10/97).

"[Service learning] didn't change my approach because to me students are students. Everybody has an equal opportunity to learn" (European-American student placed in a predominantly white, low-income center) (K. G., 12/96).

"I have trouble seeing the culture of the kids. . . as much different than my own. I grew up in a diverse community of people... I felt as if it were my own community. . .which made me feel at home" (European-American student placed in a predominantly African American center) (R. P., 5/98).

It is important to recognize commonalities people share. For many teachers, the shift from a deficiency perspective to one that focuses on commonalities is a step forward. However, blindness to color or other differences blocks one's ability to see cultural differences or to recognize the significance of systematic racism, sexism, and social class discrimination. For example, R. P., the European-American student above who felt at home working in a predominantly African American community center, connected with youth around sports and music, interests he shared with them. At the same time, he had difficulty articulating himself as a cultural being, or recognizing privileges that his whiteness conferred on him, and often in class he vocally resisted these ideas.

Nothing new. When service learning placements evoke memories of their own youth, preservice teachers may find little to motivate new learning. They are not surprised or uncomfortable. School-based experiences frequently have this impact, but so can community-based placements. For example, preservice teachers who have experienced poverty or divorce may find themselves experiencing circumstances that seem similar, at least superficially. A European American prospective teacher believed she could "relate to what these kids are going through" (L.H., 10/30/96). Her parents divorced, she spent numerous nights with friends, she recalled little help with homework. However, she viewed poverty as one of several possibly problematic family conditions, including "emotional support, sibling relationships,

parental occupations, and economic resources"(L.H., 12/16/96). In her final course paper, she wrote that service learning helped her realize that "each child has his or her own family conditions," and that as a teacher she should "take into consideration what is going on in a child's life." Yet, she still located the source of problems in families; "most parents at the center simply don't care" (L.H., 12/12/96). Her perception of new experiences through lenses tinted by previous family problems increased her empathy, but hindered her understanding of societal influences upon family concerns.

Avoidance. We have had a small handful of preservice teachers who actively tried to avoid the community service learning experience all together. When it is a course requirement, most accept the need to complete it, even if they are afraid and not sure initially of the point for the assignment. However, a few have requested alternative placements in school settings. This has happened mainly when they did not find a useful role in their community placement, had difficulty scheduling it, or were unable to connect the experience with conceptual insights in class. It is important for teacher education programs to minimize the experience of preservice teachers learning "nothing new" or wanting to leave the placement, to the extent possible, by matching them with placement sites that are logistically workable, challenging, and offer as much structure or guidance as the preservice teacher may need.

Disconfirmation of prior stereotypes and beliefs

For many preservice teachers, the community-based service learning placement offered experiences that caused them to seriously question prior beliefs. As we noted earlier, disconfirmation of prior beliefs is marked by surprise and anxiety, and these preservice teachers usually experienced their placements quite emotionally. Those who experienced the greatest surprise and anxiety described the experience as "eye-opening."

Eye-opening. The largest proportion of our European-American preservice teachers in the Mid-West described their service experience as an "eye-opener," a "first encounter" with racial and ethnic diversity and poverty. They expressed the uncertainty, shock, and fear common to entering a totally new situation. (Most European-American students in the West

Coast group had at least some prior experience with cultural diversity, and were more likely to articulate colorblindness, or pragmatic learning, which is described below.)

Many in the eye-opening group recognized over the semester that previous beliefs were incorrect. For example, in her final reflective paper a European-American female preservice teacher described her service at a local African American church as significant because "it was the first real exposure (not through the media) that allowed me to develop relationships with people from another race and culture. . . .It was a chance to develop appreciation for a different style of communication, teaching, and learning" (R. L., 12/96). A European American male placed at a community center serving a low-income, mostly white population described his experience as eye-opening in each of three reflective essays. Service learning opened his eyes to "the great aspects of teaching elementary kids. Every time I walk into the building, the kids put a huge smile on my face. I feel really appreciated" (W.H., 10/8/97). Also, the experience "really opened my eyes to the intelligence of kids these days. They know about things at an elementary age that I don't remember learning until junior or senior high." It was unclear what these "things" were, but he went on to talk about teaching general manners, and he was heartened to "make a difference" (W.H., 10/22/97). In a final essay, he wrote: "this experience was an eye-opener as I saw first hand some of the problems children have and the way an individual can make a change in that child's attitude" (W.H., 11/15/97). For this preservice teacher, service learning initiated positive consideration of others, yet some deficit notions and savior orientations remained.

Having an eye-opening experience is not incompatible with adhering to stereotypes or seeing onesself as a savior. For example, a European American female student wrote of her service at a community center serving low-income girls that: "another eye-opener is the various kinds of children there. My hometown is mostly a middle to upper class neighborhood, but many of these children come from low-income families. It is obvious these children come from different backgrounds than I am used to. One girl, who was nine, said she was good at bribing people" (A.B., 10/8/97). In a later reflective paper she added: "I'm still having trouble relating

with the children there. These girls are a little rougher than I expected." Yet, she was beginning to question her views. "I was surprised at the number who wanted to participate in our project [a series of activities].The girls had many questions and seemed excited. I think this will turn into a good experience for them and me" (A.B., 11/17/97).

The eye-opening stage would not necessarily be problematic, except that the learning often ends at the end of the semester. Usually, preservice teachers who describe their experiences as eye-opening are only beginning to ask good questions at this time. Often, they are enthusiastic and want to keep learning, but without structure and guidance, simply move on to the next semester, and this one eye-opening experience becomes a part of their past. For example, a European American male preservice teacher was placed in a predominantly African-American community center. He helped develop the center's computer use, and in the process, learned to question his prior assumption that African American culture does not value technology. However, two semesters later he student taught in a predominantly white prep school in an urban area. In student teaching seminar discussions, he expressed a strong lack of desire to teach in an inner-city public school because he felt that the students did not want to learn. His one-semester experience in the African American community center did not transform his perspective about African American youth. Nor should it be expected to do so.

Too often educators expect short field experiences to accomplish more than they can. When viewed as a small part of a potentially long and difficult developmental learning trajectory, semester-long experiences can be helpful building blocks, but they do not constitute the trajectory itself.

Making connections. Preservice teachers with prior life experiences of discrimination or deprivation can "make connections" to similar experiences of other groups. This was particularly true of preservice teachers of color who were placed in settings dominated by a cultural group other than their own.

For example, a Mexican immigrant female student was placed in an African American school. Shortly after attending her placement for the first time, she came to class loudly

describing the placement in strongly deficit terms, highlighting gang activity and dysfunctional families. The professor was about to intervene, when another Mexican American student stopped the first student, saying, "That's what Anglos say about us, that our neighborhoods are full of gangs." The two of them, joined by two other Mexican American students, then discussed how to interpret the culture of a group other than one's own. Prospective teachers were given structured learning activities to do in their placement sites; this preservice teacher decided to investigate race and the economics of the neighborhood, looking, for example, at the race of employers and employees in local businesses and availability of various city services. By the end of the semester, she was able to draw many insightful parallels between historic and contemporary experiences of discrimination faced by both Mexican Americans and African Americans. She began her final paper with some qualifications:

> "It has always been easy for me to talk about my own culture because I have grown up with it all my life. . . .The interpretation of the African American culture may not be completely accurate because I am an outsider and have not spent enough time with the people from the culture." (J. P., 5/98)

Her paper then probed important connections between the experiences of the two groups, such as in segregation and job discrimination; and described some differences between the groups, such as in food and family life. Over the semester, she learned to connect and relate the two groups' experiences, and she also began to realize when she fell back on stereotypes out of ignorance.

As another example, a Jewish preservice teacher was able to connect racism with anti-Semitism. At the community center in which she was placed, a racist name-calling incident was handled directly by the African American assistant director. The prospective teacher, who observed the incident, found it helped her confront her fears of racial disturbances. "Being Jewish, I've dealt with stereotypical comments. I am sympathetic to other cultures because of this. But, I was nervous about handling racial situations in the classroom. This experience allowed me to contact and overcome my fears" (M.J., 12/96).

Preservice teachers who have prior life experiences with discrimination may define service learning as "nothing new" if they are placed in a situation that does not challenge them to learn, or as confirming stereotypes if they are placed in a setting dominated by a marginalized group other than their own. They need guidance by professors to link old and new experiences and to utilize their realizations to help classmates interpret their experiences.

Pragmatic learning. Some European-American preservice teachers experienced worthwhile learning in their placement, but did not make a significant conceptual shift. By this, we mean that they entered the placement with relatively little knowledge of issues related to culture or race, but this was not their first cross-cultural encounter, so they did not describe the experience as "eye-opening." During the semester, they identified something new and practical to learn (such as cultural interaction style and its implications for discipline in the classroom), focused much of their attention on this, and integrated it into their prior belief system.
For example, a European-American woman in her thirties was placed in a predominantly African American setting. This was not her first cross-cultural experience; she brought some sophistication in her thinking with her, although one would not regard her as an anti-racist activist. In her placement, she became curious about why young African American children sometimes care for children younger than themselves, and completed an investigative paper on this question. The paper examined legacies of slavery on the family, communal African value systems, African American child-rearing patterns, and wages for African American working mothers. Her paper, and her class discussion about it, were quite insightful. However, she did not discuss this investigation as having given her a new way to think about culture and difference; when the semester ended, she simply went on to the next set of courses. We do not disparage her; if she teaches in a classroom with African American students, she developed constructive insights that will serve students well. Her discussion in class suggested, however, that getting a job and supporting her family was her highest priority, and that she viewed multiculturalism pragmatically as a work-related issue.

Similarly, other preservice teachers who focused their attention on learning something constructive took a pragmatic stance toward learning. Several focused, for example, on implications of cultural style for teaching strategies. Their learning was facilitated by structured investigation activities. For example, some completed a mini-ethnographic observation on culture and communication style, and found their observations connected with information discussed in class about culture and classroom teaching. As a result, a European American female preservice teacher, who began the semester insisting that there were no significant cultural differences, revised her conception to acknowledge that we are both similar and different, and that both the similarities and the differences matter.

Increased feelings of self-worth: "Giving back to the community"

Many preservice teachers of color regard service learning as an opportunity to "give back" to their communities, and if allowed to select their own placements, choose settings dominated by their own cultural group. They feel a strong responsibility to use the opportunity to return guidance and support previously extended to them. For example, one African American preservice teacher volunteered her time, beyond the hours required for the course, to help start a breakfast program at a local black church. In a reflective essay she wrote: "One step or program at a time I can really make a difference in the lives of my students" (K.J., 10/97). Another African American preservice teacher wrote of her experience: "The main reason I had for becoming a teacher was to give back to the community. Girls Inc. has given me the opportunity to do this" (P.S., 10/97). While at the center, an African American mother requested homework help for her daughter from this volunteer of color. The preservice teacher expressed her feelings about the request in this way: "Her mother pulled me aside and told me to do a good job helping her. This really gave me a feeling of responsibility. It makes me feel good knowing I can be of some help to the community" (P.S., 10/97). Yet another African American preservice teacher planned to open a daycare center to assist teen mothers in her community, after earning her college degree. In addition to her placement at Headstart, she worked as a volunteer for a Saturday "Safety Fair" in a subsidized housing project. In a

reflective essay she wrote that she, "really enjoyed working at the fair. It was a real asset to the community. It made parents aware of a lot of safety issues" (J. P., 11/97). Preservice teachers of color like these felt strongly enough about community responsibilities to volunteer time and effort beyond that required in the course.

Becoming Activists

Most of the non-European-American, and a very few European-American prospective teachers could be described as activists in the making. By this we mean that they conceptualized a community different from their own in terms of its strengths and resources, situated that community within struggles for power and economic resources, and committed themselves to furthering activist work through the profession of teaching. Community service learning during this one semester was part of an on-going set of experiences that propelled them in this direction. The prospective teachers of color, described above as "making connections" and "giving back to the community" were, by and large, on their way to becoming activists.

For example, an Asian American female preservice teacher had grown up in a predominantly African American community. In college, she was a very active student leader in race relations and also active in community service. She completed her community service learning in a high school tutoring program. In her final paper, she discussed how growing up in an Asian American family while living in a predominantly African American neighborhood facilitated her ability to cross cultural boundaries in a new community. She was able to relate easily to the students she tutored, and to talk openly with them about racial issues. She concluded her paper: "As a people of struggle, I consider the culture of both communities to be a part of me, where I fight for the rights of our humanity." (A.L., 5/98). For preservice teachers like her, a multicultural education teacher education program with a community service learning experience provides an opportunity to deepen what they already know, and to develop pedagogical skills that translate their knowledge and awareness into the work of a teacher.

## Service Learning for Multicultural Teacher Education

When one begins to ask seriously what it means to learn to teach effectively in multicultural settings, a host of highly important questions surface. How can I relate comfortably with the students and their parents? How can I learn to build teaching on the experiences, the language, and the culture students bring into the classroom? How can I become aware of how my own culture impacts on my interpretation of life in classrooms? How can I help the students learn to get along? Serious consideration of these questions should lead to deeper questions about justice and power in a culturally diverse and highly stratified society. Multicultural education, in fact, was born in the social upheaval of the Civil Rights movement, as part of a larger movement to dismantle racism and other forms of injustice, and to build schools and other institutions that affirm the humanity of all of us. As such, multicultural education is a highly political endeavor that should unsettle the years of prior socialization preservice teachers have experienced, and challenge the privileges that most have inherited.

Rhoads (1997) discusses "critical community service" in very similar terms. Ultimately, he writes, "critical community service is intended to create social change, and therefore it is expected that participants engage in the larger struggle to improve social conditions" (p. 228). The framework we presented in this article locates preservice teachers along a continuum of positions that can be taken as it relates to this vision of creating "a more liberatory form of education" (Rhoads, p. 228). As our data illustrated, few preservice teachers showed themselves as in the process of becoming activists; most, and particularly those who were European- American, were still in the process of having their eyes opened, and testing their prior beliefs and stereotypes against experience in the community. When they begin to teach, even without community service learning, this is where they will be, developmentally.

Based on our experience in using community service learning as a part of multicultural teacher education, we believe that it does facilitate teacher development for multicultural education, but does not work as a panacea. As noted earlier, Read (cited in Sheckley & Keeton, 1997) argues that adults are more comfortable with evidence that supports their prior

knowledge; adults want to learn information that is useful, but are uncomfortable with experiences that disconfirm what they believe they already know. Experiences that challenge prior knowledge are marked by anxiety. The learner can either disregard unsettling occurrences, "make connections" which alter his/her future perceptions, or simply allow the experience to be "eye-opening."

If learners dismiss unsettling experiences, skirt reconsideration of stereotypes and assumptions, and avoid thinking about issues of power and privilege, community-service learning adds little or nothing to multicultural teacher education. However, to the extent that strong placements, pertinent course activities, and regular reflections push preservice teachers to open their eyes and make new connections, community service-learning has the potential to help them develop a basis for engaging with the communities of their students in a way that can lead to more learning. A teacher's first cross-cultural encounter should not be in the classroom, after he/she has been certified to teach. While some such teachers become active learners, many find previous stereotypes confirmed (e.g., Sleeter, 1992). This can hold for European American teachers and for teachers of color who encounter children from a different ethnic or racial group, or a lower social class. We believe that teachers should have guidance in learning how to learn in cross-cultural communities, before they begin to teach. Community service learning experiences offer a powerful tool for cross-cultural engagement. However, such experiences need to be integrated throughout the teacher education program, and carefully planned.

Service learning placement sites need to be selected carefully; care also needs to be given to matching preservice teachers with placement sites. Those sites that, generally speaking, facilitated the greatest degree of learning were closely connected to the local community and run by members of the community being served, were in need of volunteers and had someone willing to orient and help them, and were effective in the community and had various forms of evidence illustrating their effectiveness (such as wall displays showing exemplary programs). The matches between preservice teachers and placements that seemed

most productive were those in which the site offered experiences that challenged the preservice teacher in new ways. This can be intangible and difficult to plan. In general, preservice teachers learned most when placements were peopled by those culturally different from them, and when they formed relationships with people old enough (usually adults) to interpret various dimensions of the community—its history, its issues, and its culture—for them. However, some preservice teachers of color felt service in sites dominated by people from their own groups offered beneficial opportunities to give something back to communities similar to those which previously sustained them.

The ethics of working with community agencies needs to be considered and respected. Partnerships with community organizations need to benefit both the agency and the university. In many ways, the needs of these two differ, and it is easy to let the needs of the university overshadow those of the community. For example, university semesters usually do not mesh with the timeline of projects in community agencies, and volunteers who come and go on a university calendar may not be useful to the agency. Although this article focuses on benefits of community service learning to preservice teachers, the benefits to the community also need to be an explicit part of any process of negotiation.

Community service learning needs to be a part of coursework, and accompanied by frequent guided direction for reflecting and learning. For example, one of us had students complete mini-ethnographic investigations in the community and connect these closely with topics in class. Mini-ethnographic investigations varied widely, ranging from interviews about local community history, to observations of behavior in informal settings, to interviews with children to find out their strengths and interests outside school, to analyses of access to community services. Preservice teachers who learn "nothing new" are generally those who put little effort into their mini-investigations and class discussions. Guided reflection is a very important dimension of service learning; the field of service learning provides an array of guidance to instructors in the development and use of guided reflection (e.g., Wade, 1997). We found that the guidance we give students, the effort we expend connecting their learning to

course content, and the time we give them to discuss what they are learning has strong benefits, and helps propel many of them toward "making connections," "disconfirming prior beliefs," and "pragmatic learning." Further, we have found it helpful to prepare students for an emotional reaction, and to support them when they express confusion, great enthusiasm, surprise, or other intense feelings. As students articulate their feelings, often they are able to develop insights or frame questions more insightfully.

Community-based service learning needs to be viewed as part of an on-going learning process. As our data illustrate, what our students gained from the experience built on their prior experiences (or lack thereof). By the end of the semester, they were not "ready" in some finished sense to be excellent multicultural teachers, but rather most had gained some experiences and insights upon which further learning could be built. To the degree that teacher education programs plan for a long-range developmental process, we recommend that community-based service learning continue to be a part of that process.

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